

What do you think of it so far?

'RUBBISH!'

"RUBBISH... shocking... a waste of time." Those were the words of ardent Wycombe Wanderers supporters as they left the Spotted Dog ground on Friday night.

Those supporters had witnessed one of Wycombe Wanderers' poorest games of the season, a 0-0 draw away to Clapton, a side which has conceded no fewer than 112 goals this term and have only 12 points to their name.

I don't really blame the fans for their comments for this was certainly one of the worst games I have seen this season. But it is easy to criticise without looking into the reasons for the disappointment.

Reason number one was the pitch. The Spotted Dog ground has never been one of the best in the league and the playing surface on Friday was almost devoid of grass, except on the wings. In the middle, clouds of dust were kicked up by the players who had to cope with a difficult bouncing ball.

Reason number two was the opposition. Clapton, who have been doomed to Division Two of the Rothmans Isthmian League for some time, wanted to go out on a high note. What better way than to take a couple of points from the champions. The home side deserve full credit for a hard, fighting finale to the season.

Clapton obviously had a greater appetite for the game than the Blues, whose will to win seems to have dwindled a little now they are out of the championship race. A place in the top three looks less of an incentive than the title itself.

Nevertheless, Wycombe could not be accused of lack of effort on Friday. They gave their best but, for the reasons listed earlier, they were not good enough. I think it should also be said that Clapton are a much better side now than earlier in the season, when they let in five goals at Loakes Park.

Centre half Steve Cooper gave

— say the fans

By **STUART EARP** Clapton 0, Wycombe 0

a sterling display in the middle of the home defence while Ray Barbieri used the ball intelligently in midfield. Goalkeeper Ron Syrett was seldom tested by the weak Wycombe forward line but was always well positioned whenever danger threatened.

As the first half got underway, a strong wind sent up clouds of dust from the centre of the field just to make matters worse for the players. Clapton, however, didn't seem to mind a great deal and promising centre forward John Kerslake netted after only a few seconds but saw his effort ruled out for a foul on goalkeeper John Maskell.

Syrett did well to get a touch to Dylan Evans' effort in the fourth minute after John Delaney had headed on a long throw. Brian Messom clearing the ball off the line. It was about the closest Wycombe came to a goal all night.

Graham Mackenzie linked well in the first half and tried to keep the ball on the ground but even simple passes became difficult as the ball bobbled and Clapton challenged eagerly.

Before half-time Jim Davis had another Clapton effort disallowed, this time for offside, while Terry Reardon shot weakly at the goalkeeper at the other end.

The untidy pattern of the game continued in the second half but as Clapton became more confident, they raised their game considerably. Davis found himself with only Birdseye in the Wycombe half after a break from a corner but the best piece of individual football came after 60 minutes.

Following a free kick, Kerslake ran across the box and from 25 yards, sent in a vicious volley that was swerving inside the near post. Maskell launched himself superbly to push the ball away.

At the other end, Wycombe's best hopes of a goal seemed to stem from set pieces and Jim Holt had to clear off the line from Delaney after 65 minutes. Bruce Macrae replaced a tired Tony Horseman three minutes later but although giving Cooper more trouble, he was unable to lift the jaded visitors' attack.

Dave Alexander gave 100 per cent throughout the game and had two or three long range efforts while Ray Eaton was the pick of the back four. Overall, however, this was a game Wycombe and their fans, will want to put firmly out of their minds.

CLAPTON: R. Syrett; J. Holt, L. Bird, S. Cooper, B. Messom; T. Davis, R. Barbieri, A. Taylor; M. Egan, J. Kerslake, J. Davis. Sub J. Roche (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; G. Mackenzie, T. Reardon, D. Alexander; D. Evans, A. Horseman (sub B. Macrae 68 mins), M. Hollifield.

Referee: C. Boswell (Gillingham).

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dagenham	38	24	6	8	83	42	78
Wycombe	39	21	10	8	58	38	73
Ilford	38	21	8	9	53	33	71
Enfield	34	21	7	6	66	26	70
Dulwich	41	21	5	15	64	40	68
Hendon	40	19	11	10	55	36	68
L'head	41	19	9	13	63	53	66
Staines	39	19	8	12	45	32	65
Slough	39	17	10	12	57	43	61
Tooting	37	17	9	11	61	43	60
Sutton	39	16	10	13	66	55	58
W'stow	42	14	11	17	47	60	53
Bishops	39	13	11	15	47	46	50
Hayes	41	10	19	12	42	44	49
Hitchin	40	13	10	17	43	54	49
Woking	41	13	9	19	55	61	48
Barking	39	14	6	19	56	63	48
Kings	40	13	8	19	52	83	47
L'stone	40	10	10	20	40	59	40
Southall	38	9	8	21	48	63	35
Oxford	41	9	8	24	29	63	35
Clapton	42	3	3	36	19	112	12